

CLAIMS:

1. An apparatus suitable for aiding survival during outdoor activities, the apparatus comprising:

5 a sheet defined by opposing first and second longitudinal edges; and by first and second opposing transverse edges, the first and second longitudinal and transverse edges forming a periphery of the sheet; the sheet being substantially bisected by a notional longitudinal mid-line intermediate the first and second longitudinal edges;

10 at least two pairs of support means, each pair of support means comprising a first support means and a second support means, each first support means being adjacent the first longitudinal edge; and each second support means being adjacent the notional longitudinal mid-line.

15 2. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first support means of the pair of support means substantially opposes the second support means of the pair of support means.

3. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a plurality of pairs of support means are provided in a substantially parallel spaced-apart arrangement, such that each pair of support means are arranged substantially transverse to the notional longitudinal mid-line.

20 4. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein each of the first and second support means comprises a loop.

25 5. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein each of the first and second support means is adapted for receiving, in use, a hand of an operator, such that the apparatus can be manually supported and carried in use.

30 5. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least some of the first support means are axially aligned in a longitudinal direction so as to be suitable for receiving a first elongate support element; and at least some of the second support means are axially aligned in a longitudinal direction so as to be suitable for receiving a second elongate support

element, such that the apparatus can be supported and carried by one or more operators by means of the first and second support elements, in use.

6. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein each pair of support means may be
5 suitably opposed in a transverse direction so as to be suitable for receiving an elongate transverse support element, arranged substantially transverse to the first longitudinal edge and to the notional longitudinal mid-line, such that the apparatus can be supported and carried by one or more operators by means of at least one, optionally a plurality of spaced-apart transverse support elements, in use.

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7. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the plurality of first and second support means are arranged so as to be suitable for receiving the first and second elongate support elements in an overlapping criss-cross arrangement.

15 8. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least one pair of end support means are provided adjacent the first and second transverse edges, respectively, and preferably, each end support means comprises a loop.

20 9. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein a strap extends between adjacent the first support means of the pair of support means and adjacent the second support means of the pair of support means, wherein the terminal or otherwise free ends of the strap are attached to the sheet at least adjacent the first and second support means.

25 10. An apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein the strap is integrally formed with the first and second support means, wherein the strap is attached to the sheet at least adjacent the first and second support means.

11. An apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein a plurality of spaced-apart straps are disposed substantially transversely relative to the longitudinal mid-line.

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12. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sheet is provided with fastening means adjacent the first and second longitudinal edges, the fastening means being adapted to releasably secure the first and second longitudinal edges together.

5 13. An apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein fastening means may further be provided adjacent the first and second transverse edges.

10 14. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the apparatus is further provided with securing means on one of the first and second longitudinal edges, the securing means being suitably shaped and dimensioned for a complementary securing arrangement with first or second support means, on the other of the first and second longitudinal edges, such that the first or second support means and the securing means are adapted to secure the first and second longitudinal edges together.

15 15. An apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein the apparatus is further provided with securing means on one of the first and second transverse edges, the securing means being suitably shaped and dimensioned for a complementary securing arrangement with first or second support means, on the other of the first and second transverse edges, such that the first or second support means and the securing means are adapted to secure the first and 20 second transverse edges together.

25 16. An apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the fastening means and/or the securing means are in the form of zip fasteners, hooks, snap fasteners, Velcro (Trade Mark), clips, clasps, straps with buckles, loops or the like.

17. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sheet has a first surface and a second surface opposed to the first surface, the first surface being adapted to surround a user's body when the sheet is in a folded state.

30 18. An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein the second surface is substantially bisected, when the apparatus is in the folded state, into upper and lower surfaces, and the support means are secured to the lower surface, in use.

19. An apparatus as claimed in claim 9, wherein each of the straps is secured along at least some of its length to the lower surface of the sheet in use.

5 20. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein at least one corner support means is also provided at each corner of the sheet, to enable each corner of the sheet to be fastened to at least one support to create a water catcher.

10 21. An apparatus as claimed in claim 20, wherein each corner support means comprises a loop.

15 22. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sheet is further provided with a plurality of eyelets arranged around the at least first and second longitudinal edges of the sheet, wherein the eyelets are adapted to receive a peg to secure the at least first and second longitudinal edges of the sheet to the ground, to enable the sheet to form a tent-like structure.

23. An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein the first surface is brightly coloured to enable the sheet to be used as a distress signal indicator.

20 24. An apparatus as claimed in claim 18, wherein at least the upper surface of the second surface is brightly coloured to enable the sheet to be used as a distress signal indicator when the sheet is in the folded state.

25 25. An apparatus as claimed in claim 23, wherein the first surface is fluorescent or luminescent and/or reflective.

26. An apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein at least the upper surface of the second surface is fluorescent or luminescent and/or reflective.

30 27. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sheet is provided with a thermally insulating material located between the first and second surfaces.

28. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein an external layer of a fire retardant material is provided on the second surface.

29. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sheet is provided with a substantially centrally disposed aperture, to enable the apparatus to be used as a rain-shielding garment such as a poncho.

30. An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein the aperture is located substantially mid-way along the notional longitudinal mid-line.

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31. An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, wherein the aperture is substantially covered by a portion of material, which, when the apparatus is being used as a poncho, acts as a hood covering the user's head.

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32. A kit suitable for aiding survival during outdoor activities, the kit comprising a sheet as defined hereinbefore and at least one elongate and/or transverse support elements such that the kit can be assembled in the form of any one of a sleeping bag, a blanket, a distress signal indicator, a stretcher, a water catcher, a hammock, a tent, a shelter or a poncho.